



UNITED STATES SENATE  
**REPUBLICAN  
POLICY COMMITTEE**

Larry E. Craig, Chairman  
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*ABM Treaty Today Officially Relegated to the Dustbin of History*

## **Democrats Reverse Earlier Pledge to Defend Americans**

Just three years ago, 93 percent of the Senate's Democrats (42 of 45) voted in favor of S. 257, the National Missile Defense Act of 1999. This bill made it the policy of the United States to: 1) deploy, as soon as technologically possible, a national missile defense system to defend U.S. territory against limited ballistic missile attack, and 2) continue negotiations for the reduction of U.S. and Russian strategic nuclear weapons. During debate on the Senate Floor, many Senators made statements expressing their support for the bill.

Yet every single Democrat on the Senate Armed Services Committee who **voted in favor of** missile defense in 1999 recently **voted to cut** \$814 million from the missile defense program during markup of the FY 2003 Defense Authorization bill, undermining President Bush's efforts to defend Americans as soon as technologically possible. And so today, the day the United States officially withdraws from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, we ask the question: Do Democrats want to defend Americans?

This most recent defection by Armed Services Committee Democrats from their 1999 stand is even more perplexing coming on the heels of the United States and Russia signing an arms control agreement to significantly reduce strategic nuclear warheads. During the 1999 debate, Democrats fought to add such language to the missile defense bill. While President Bush is making good on the Democrats' demand that missile defense be tied to nuclear weapons reduction, Democrats are renegeing on their promise to defend Americans.

### **Democrats Supported the National Missile Defense Act of 1999**

In March of 1999, the full Senate debated S. 257, the National Missile Defense Act of 1999, which in its original form stated:

"It is the policy of the United States to deploy, as soon as is technologically possible, an effective National Missile Defense system capable of defending the territory of the United States against limited ballistic missile attack (whether accidental, unauthorized, or deliberate)."

This statement clearly and succinctly committed supporters to deployment of a limited missile defense system to protect Americans from ballistic missile attack.

There were two additions to the original bill language — one to include cost considerations, and another to emphasize the importance of nuclear force reductions — enabling almost all Democrats to vote in favor of the Act.

## **What Democrats Said About the National Missile Defense Act**

The following remarks were made by Democrats during Floor debate.

### **Senator Levin (Then Ranking Member, Senate Armed Services Committee)**

“I support the passage of this bill with the two amendments we have adopted. We have made a number of very important changes in the bill which now cause me to support the bill because, very specifically, we now have two policies that are set forth in the bill, no longer just one.” [*Congressional Record*, 3/17/99, p. S2814]

### **Senator Kennedy (Member, Senate Armed Services Committee)**

“Mr. President, on balance, I believe this legislation deserves bipartisan support. There is a clear need to do more to protect our country from the threat of missile attacks. This bill avoids most of the problems of previous versions and is consistent with our responsibility to continue working with Russia to reduce the immense threat from their nuclear arsenal.” [*CR*, 3/17/99, p. S2809]

### **Senator Landrieu (Member, Senate Armed Services Committee)**

“I strongly support a limited national missile defense. It is important that we pursue this program with energy and determination. But we must also keep pursuing other means of enhancing our security.” [*CR*, 3/16/99, p. S2718]

### **Senator Conrad**

“I rise in support of S. 257. Although this bill is not as comprehensive or detailed as I would prefer, I have come to the conclusion that S. 257, as amended, sends an important signal of our country’s commitment to defending itself from ballistic missile attack from a rogue state. . . I am an advocate for national missile defense, and have authored legislation that has advanced the NMD program. . . . Increasingly, I am convinced that we need NMD sooner rather than later . . .” [*CR*, 3/17/99, p. 2806]

## **Democrats Demand Addition of Arms Reduction Language**

Originally, S. 257 only included language calling for deployment of a limited national missile defense system, which led Democrats to argue that the bill promoted missile defense at the cost of negotiated reductions in nuclear forces. According to then Ranking Member of the Senate Armed Services Committee Carl Levin, “the greatest sticking point is the omission in this bill . . . of the acknowledgment of the importance of continuing to negotiate reductions in Russian nuclear forces” [CR, 3/16/99, p. S2722].

This supposed deficiency was remedied when Senator Landrieu offered an amendment declaring, “It is the policy of the United States to seek continued negotiated reductions in Russian nuclear forces.” Democrats insisted such language was vital to gaining Democrat support for the bill, as it would place the need for nuclear force reductions with Russia on an equal footing with the deployment of missile defenses. Senator Landrieu argued:

“This amendment will make sure it is the policy that we have a national missile defense system capable to deploy, as soon as technologically possible, an effective system and one that also states, with this amendment, that while we are developing this we will continue to negotiate reductions in Russian nuclear forces. It is the policy, a joint policy. It makes this bill stronger and better. And it enables us to pass this bill that recognizes the threat is real, that the world has changed significantly” [CR, 3/16/99, S2722].

Echoing Senator Landrieu’s words, other Democrats made the point that adoption of the amendment would create two national security priorities – pursuing arms control and deploying a limited national missile defense.

#### **Senator Levin**

“Now we have a specific policy statement equal to the policy statement relative to deploying an effective limited national missile defense subject to authorization and appropriations. The second policy statement which is critically important says that it is the policy of the United States to continue to negotiate reductions in the number of nuclear weapons on Russian soil.” [CR, 3/17/99, S2815]

#### **Senator Conrad**

“Even more significant was the amendment offered by the distinguished ranking member of the Armed Services Committee’s Strategic Forces Subcommittee, Senator Landrieu. In affirming that it is our nation’s policy to pursue continued negotiated reductions to Russian nuclear forces, the Landrieu amendment makes unmistakably clear that as our NMD program moves forward we will take into account our arms control agreements and objectives.” [CR, 3/17/99, S2806]

#### **Senator Kennedy**

“The bill declares that it is the policy of the United States to deploy a limited national missile defense system as soon as it is technologically possible, but it also stresses that it is the policy of the United States to continue to negotiate with Russia to reduce our nuclear arsenals.” [CR, 3/17/99, S2809]

Directly prior to the vote on the amended bill, Senator Landrieu appealed to doubting Democrat Senators by claiming that:

“... By setting deploying of a limited national missile defense and future reductions of nuclear stockpiles on equal footing, this legislation emphasizes the complimentary nature of those two key national security concerns. They are equally important, and we cannot lose sight of one for the other” [CR, 3/17/99, S2820].

Yet the recent vote by all Democrat members of the Armed Services Committee to cut drastically funding for missile defense completely contradicts their commitment in 1999 to support a joint policy of deploying missile defense and reducing strategic nuclear weapons. Such radical reductions to the missile defense budget are inconsistent with the policy of “deploying missile defenses as soon as is technologically possible.”

While the Democrats backtrack on missile defense, President Bush has taken the Democrat call for continuing reductions to a final conclusion by actually signing onto a legally-binding document with President Putin that requires each country to reduce its nuclear arsenal by two-thirds, to between 1,700 and 2,200 warheads, by the end of 2012. Senator Lieberman called the agreement “a bold, significant step” [*New York Times*, 5/14/02].

## **They Can’t Have it Both Ways**

President Bush’s national security policy has pursued with equal vigor the deployment of missile defense and the reduction of strategic nuclear warheads. Several years ago, Democrats were saying the same thing — that missile defense and arms reductions were compatible policies. It is difficult to understand how the Democrats who serve on the Armed Services Committee can now turn around and vote to make devastating cuts to the missile defense program. One possible explanation for this reversal, given their years of opposition to missile defense, is that the cuts are motivated by a Democrat desire to slow progress toward the deployment of missile defenses to defend Americans.

Several years ago, Senate Democrats joined in the call to deploy missile defenses as soon as technologically possible. The \$814 million cut by Democrats on the Armed Services Committee will delay the day that all Americans will be protected from ballistic missile attack. Democrats should follow their words calling for missile defense and arms reductions — and their actions in voting for the 1999 National Missile Defense Act — by supporting President Bush’s budget on missile defense.

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